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ABSTRACT

A student teacher who was concerned about a third grader's difficulties with her assignments, apparent low self-esteem, and anger observed the child in school for a 6-week period on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays for 2 hours each day. For 2 weeks, the child was also observed at a recreational center on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays for an average of 2.5 hours per observation. Finally, observations were conducted during the weekends the child spent with the student teacher as part of the student teacher's intervention. Data from the observations were used to formulate descriptions of the child's baseline behavior before and after the interventions. Peer interviews were conducted during three of the observations to determine how children in the classroom saw their relationship with the child. The interventions of the student teacher included introduction of appropriate behavior; an out-of-town field trip; and praise when it was warranted. As a result of the intervention, the student teacher realized that the child became more aggressive in school when community and family life became difficult for her. After the intervention, the child's work at school improved and the child seemed to take pride in her assignments. The time spent in school and with the student teacher appeared to provide the child with the confidence she needed to feel successful. (HOD)

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The Effects of Community and Family Life on a Third Grader's Behavior at School

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Running Head: Behavior at School--A Case Study

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine if a third grader's behavior at school was affected by her community and family life. If so, can I make a difference in her life by spending time with her and giving her the chance to experience life outside of her community. Data were gathered through observations made at her school, at her recreational center, and during the weekends she spent with me. A base-line behavior was noted through these observations. Intervention was then applied to see if her behavior changed. Intervention was designed to take her out of her environment, to expose her to things that she would not have otherwise given the chance, and to correct undesirable behaviors as they arose. Her behavior at school was greatly influenced by her experiences at home and in her community. She became more aggressive in school when community and family life became difficult for her. When intervention was applied, her work at school improved. She seemed to take pride with all her assignments for she took the time to make them neat. Time spent in school and with me appeared to be providing her with the confidence that she needed to feel successful.

During my student teaching, a group of children were having difficulties doing well on their spelling tests. Four children, in particular, were not studying for their spelling. They missed most of their words on their spelling test two weeks in a row. When they received their test papers, it also hurt me to see their faces when they saw their grades. I did not want them to feel failure in school; therefore, my goal was to help these children to develop good study habits, not just do well in spelling. To achieve my goal, the group did certain things. They sorted their spelling words into ABC order and pasted them onto their notebook. All the exercises that went with the spelling words were written in the notebook including the spelling test. During this time, I worked very closely with the four children. In the beginning, I was having a difficult time getting the children to learn what I wanted them to do. The children were not too keen on the extra effort that they were having to put into spelling. They spent a good many recesses with me finishing up their assignments, not just spelling but in other subjects too. Gradually, they became aware that I was not going to accept anything but their best. It was during those many recesses that I got to know one particular child, Toni. (The names appearing in this study have been changed to protect the identities of the participants.) .

I was having a hard time getting Toni to do her assignments. It was physically draining for me fighting Toni. She had ample time to do her assignments, but she just refused to do them. According to my Clinical Instructor (from now on referred to as CI), Toni was testing my authority. She put me to a strenuous test. I got to know Toni when she had to stay in for recesses. I found out that she has a brother named Anton who is in

the first grade. Her parents had divorced one another during summer. For an eight year old, she has gone through a lot. I cried twice while she was telling me about herself. The first time was when she told me about the boys bullying her down at the recreation center where she goes everyday after school. Many of the older children pick on her because she was smaller than they are. She told me that she did not want to go back (I believed she was scared). Toni is a victim of violence whether or not she realizes that fact. She is afraid to go to the recreational center because she fears what might happen to her. She does not know how long she can keep up defending herself against the older children.

The second time I cried was when she told me that her father had called her a wimp during a weekend visit. I asked her why. She told me that her father just told her that she was weak and a wimp. I asked her if the father meant it as a joke. Toni assured me that he did not. Toni often tells me that her mother does not like her. She says that Anton, her brother, is the favorite of the family because he is smarter than Toni.

Toni does not see herself as a learner nor does she think she is smart. She believes that she is going to fail third grade because my CI does not like her. Many times, I had to assure her that she would not fail third grade because she is smart and she has been working very hard. Toni appears to have low self-esteem. She seems to be angry and yet she does not know how to release her anger appropriately. She draws attention to herself any way she can. Sometimes that craving gets her in trouble. It made me wonder if Toni is praised enough at home? Does she communicate well with her parents? Is she given the attention that she needs?

Toni goes to the recreational center everyday after school. The recreational center (from now on refer to as the center) is located in a neighborhood where ninety-nine percent of the residents are African Americans assuming the pool of children at the center is representative of the neighborhood population. Prior to this study, I did not know that this neighborhood existed. Yet, the neighborhood is just a quarter of a mile from where I live near the university grounds. Police officers patrol the neighborhoods. Often, one sees male adults loitering in the street. The center measures approximately 38 feet by 25 feet. It has a kitchen facility, separate bathrooms for boys and girls, a water fountain, two computers with a broken printer, a television, a video cassette recorder, and an adequate supply of books (though only some are age appropriate) and materials for writing and art.

The center opens its doors at 4:00 p.m. which means that Toni and Anton, for forty-five minutes, are supervised by a family friend that lives nearby. Toni has been going to the center since she was four years old. Toni's mother works as a rental office manager nearby; thus, she can pick up Toni and Anton after work. Toni goes to the center not because she lives in that neighborhood; but because it is convenient for her mother. The center substitutes for expensive after school care.

The center provides a place for the children to play and do their homework. Children wander in and out of the center from four to five after the door is being opened by Mr. Key, the maintenance man. At 5:00 p.m., some children settle down and start on their homework. Those who are not doing their homework must leave. Mr. Pilot, the center's director, pairs an older child with a younger one and aids the older child in helping

the younger one with his/her homework; this time is called Reading Partner Time (RPT). Meanwhile, another person on staff works with Head Start children on things like telling time etc.

Children may work with the computer once their homework is done. They may also draw, write, and play games quietly if others are still working. Recently, the center has offered the children a chance to work in the MacIntosh Lab at the nearby university. The lab is conducted by university students on Fridays. An attendance record is kept on children who participates during RPT times throughout the week. Children get to go to the MacKintosh lab if they have good attendance. On Fridays, Mr. Pilot makes sure that all the children turn in their permission slips. No permission, no go. He then drives the children to and from the university in a Jaunt van. (Jaunt is a transportation service provided by the city that gets people to work who are not on the city bus lines.)

The center provides valuable services for the children and to their parents; however, at the same time, the center exposes the children to undesirable experiences. Due to the location of the center, the children often see adult men loitering the streets and police officers patrolling the neighborhood. Both occurrences present negative, long-lasting images. The non-working adults are not role models to which one wishes his/her children be exposed. The children may internalize this fact and believe that being out of work is all right. The presence of the patrolling police officers tells the children that their neighborhood is unsafe. The children may develop a fear for their lives and try to protect themselves by arming themselves, thus, possibly creating violence within the community.

Most of the children that go to the center live in the neighborhood. The center, unlike a school, does not have children of all ages. The children are either in the primary grades or in the middle school. There are no children in between. Younger children are exposed to things that they are not yet ready to learn, especially about boy-girl relationships. Sometimes, the older children pick on the younger ones because they are defenseless. Thus, younger children learn to be tough so that they will not become targets of violence. Toni has had to learn to be tough so that she would not become a victim.

However, this learned toughness is used in school to defy authority. After observing Toni at the center, I began to understand why she behaved the way she did in school. I have never seen children fight for crayons or fight for a chance to work on the computer the way they did at the center. She has to be tough to survive at the center or else she will be crushed; therefore, she believes that she has to be tough in order to survive in school. Darwin's "survival of the fittest" really describes the setting of the center. It is the same for Toni in school. For example, she fights to get on the color computer during computer time.

To Toni, everything is a battle. She must be the victor in every fight. Since Toni can neither verbally nor physically abuse me; therefore, she defies my authority as a way of getting back at me. She believes that the world is against her. She is ready to take on the world. Thus, violence experienced in the community is then carried over to the school. We, the educators, wonder why schools are becoming battle grounds for our children.

Toni was born to Sam Jones and Pat Smith in 1983. Pat was twenty-one when she had Toni. Sam and Pat divorced one another during the summer of 1991 when Toni was

eight years old. Toni lives with Pat who now uses her maiden name. Sam, on the other hand, lives in an apartment and has a girlfriend. Irregularly, Toni visits her father on weekends. Toni has not dealt too well with the divorce. She bottles up each time I try to get her to talk about her feelings.

However, the situation did not improve itself. Pat moved in with another man, Kevin. Kevin, himself, is also a divorcee. His son, Kevin Jr., lives with him. Now the "family" includes Kevin (pseudo-father to Toni and Anton), Pat (pseudo-mother to Kevin Jr.), Toni, Kevin Jr., and Anton. Toni calls Kevin "Big Foot" because his feet are huge. Despite the fact that Toni has her own room (she seems to like the idea), she is unhappy with the situation. Anton seems to like it. Apparently there are conflicts between Kevin Jr. and Toni. Toni thinks Kevin Jr. is "stupid" because he is unable to compute subtractions. Toni did not want to help Kevin Jr. because Kevin Jr.'s mother does not want Kevin Jr. to have anything to do with Pat's children. Toni took that literally and refused to help Kevin Jr. with his homework.

Pat is very involved in her work. According to my CI, Pat likes her job and that she is very much a career woman with a very important position. In the beginning, I thought that money was a problem for Toni's family. Then, as I got to know Toni, I changed my mind. I decided that money was not a problem for them because of all the material things Toni received for Christmas--Nintendo, ten-speed bike, etc. However, I was wrong again. One day, I asked Toni to fill out a background form for me. I told her to get help from her mother, and she told me that her mother hates her and would not be willing to help her.

On the way to music class I asked her what she meant about her mother disliking her, and she said, "She (Pat) worries about money, then Anton, then me." A few days later, I talked with my CI of about what I had learned thus far, and she said that money is a problem for Toni's family. Pat often tells my CI that after paying the bills she only has money left for gas. My CI said that Pat receives a lot of support from the relatives. Then I remembered that many of the big gifts that Toni received during Christmas were from her grandfather. After receiving this new data from my CI, I changed my mind again about the financial situation of Toni's family.

Pat may not be spending enough quality time with Toni and Anton. Pat often works late, therefore, that means Toni and Anton stay late at the center. It also means eating out a lot. Dinner time is usually a social time for the children and their parents. However, little socialization is taking place when they are eating out because Pat seems to rush the children so that she can get back to the office. Toni and Anton generally have to rush through dinner so that Pat can get back to the office. Thus, dinner, instead of being nice and calm, becomes rushed and tensed.

One day Toni came to school looking like she very deep in thought. I asked her if anything was wrong. She told me that Pat had hit her because she was blamed for the mess that she and Anton had made. I did not know whether or not to believe that Pat had hit Toni. Toni vividly described what had happen to her that weekend. She told me that her mother hit her nine times on the leg and that she laid in bed all day because she was in such pain. I had no way of checking out her story. Therefore, after a week, I made her tell

me again what had happened. She repeated with the same details and said, "I TOLD you she hit me nine times on my leg."

After that weekend, Toni seemed to truly believed that her mother dislikes her because she says she got blamed for something that Anton also did. Toni believes that Pat likes Anton better than her. Toni feels she is competing with Anton and the job for her mother's attention. Her experiences at home show up in her behavior in school. She thinks my CI dislikes her; therefore, she will fail third grade. She often tells me "You don't like me anyway" whenever she is angry at me for correcting her. Toni has yet to learn that we care; therefore, we challenge her and expect the best from her. She seems to view this challenge and expectation as forms of disliking.

Toni appears to have low self-esteem. She has yet become aware of or to internalize her capabilities. My CI stated that Toni reads at grade level without any effort. However, she has not been pushed to do well in school and at home. Toni is capable of doing anything if she puts her mind to it. She is able to draw and yet she thinks she has no talent when it comes to drawing. She is able to get ahead with reading assignments and yet she thinks that is only for smart kids in her class. Therefore, she does not read ahead. She is smart and yet she thinks she is stupid. Toni needs to realize that she is somebody and stop putting herself down in order to avoid feeling like a failure.

Toni gets attention at school by being loud. She also misbehaves so that attention is drawn to her. Sometimes, she even act as if she does not understand certain things so that extra attention may be given to her. Therefore, her behavior tends to have negative

instead of positive effects. By being loud, she is sometimes a distraction to other children in the classroom. Most importantly, she is diverting her efforts from learning. Instead of putting all her efforts into her academics, some efforts go into getting her emotional needs satisfied.

Toni's elementary school is located in a suburb three miles northeast of the university. She was bussed to the school before Pat moved in with Kevin. They now live in a nearby county. Now, Pat drops Toni and Anton off at school on her way to work. The children who live near the center are bussed to the school in order to achieve integration. The student population of the school has changed dramatically in just a few years. Prior to bussing, Toni's school was called the "Country Club." At that time, most of the children attending the school were sons and/or daughters of the professors at the university. Others were children of professionals like doctors, lawyers, etc. Now, the student population at this elementary school is a racial mix of African Americans and Caucasians of more or less equal ratio. The proportion of other minorities is negligible (statistically speaking).

In the class where I student taught, seven children out of twenty students are African Americans. All the minority children are in a single-parent homes. Some mothers have live-in boyfriends. Some children are being raised by their grandmothers. Some are being shuffled back and forth between their parents. These children have a rather unstable home life.

According to my CI, the minority children were not "pushed" in school last year due to their "blackness." My CI is very angered by this. All year, she has been trying her best

to challenge these children and get them ready for next year. She believes that they will not be challenged next year by her colleagues. She often said, "These children read on level without effort. Can you imagine what they could accomplish if they were pushed!"

Toni's behavior from the center is most observable in school because her behavior in school is like her behavior at the center. She behaves the only way she knows how and that is to be tough. According to my CI, Toni has spent many recesses indoors because she can not control her mouth. Toni does not take criticism very well. There are times when she is rude. Both my CI and I do not allow her to get away with displaying inappropriate behavior toward adults or her peers. We expect the best from her. We praise her often for work that lived up to our expectations. We do not accept work from her that is not her best. As a result, Toni is finally beginning to see herself as a "learner."

Toni's behavior in school is affected by what she has experienced in her community and family. Community is not simply defined as the immediate surrounding of an individual. According to Roland Warren, there are five major components to a community (Blackwell). Component one deals with the services and goods provided by the community to serve its members within a locality. This is called **production-distribution-consumption**. Component two is called **socialization**. Values, beliefs, and behavioral patterns are transmitted from the community to the individual within that system. **Social control** is the third component. This is "structural arrangement for influencing members toward behavioral conformity" (Blackwell, p. 15). The fourth component is **social participation.** It allows the individual to become a member of community simply by providing opportunities for the individual to

participate in the community life. Last, **mutual support** is the fifth component. **Mutual support** allows members of the community to seek help with the caring process. The caring process refers to the rearing of a child; friends and relatives may be part of this caring process.

Toni's community which include the center, the basketball team, and her relatives, encompasses these five components. Component one of the community deals with the services that it provides to its members. Therefore, the center is one of the services provided by the community to Toni and her mother, Pat. It is a place to keep Toni off the streets and help her get homework done. For Pat, it acts as day care. Little traveling time is needed for picking up Toni and Anton. Essentially, the center is a convenience for Pat.

Having a basketball team is another service provided by the community. Playing basketball allows Toni a chance to get rid of her aggression through physical exercise. It also gives Toni a chance to play basketball outside of school which otherwise she would not have. Toni is able to develop her athletic ability through the basketball team provided by her community.

Relatives provide both services and goods for Toni's family. Nearby relatives are potential babysitters for Toni and Anton. Distant relatives often provide clothing and toys to Toni and Anton which lifts some of Pat's financial burden.

Socialization, the second component, takes place during time spent at the center, on the basketball team, and at Toni's relatives homes. From the center, Toni is learning about the "survival of the fittest" instead of "love thy neighbor as thyself." Toni's aggressive

behavior displayed at school is the result of what she has learned at the center. Being nice will get you nowhere. Toni believes that if she acts weak, then she will never be anybody.

One would think that being on a basketball team would teach Toni how to be a member of the team and play for the team, not for herself. However, the rule of being a team player somehow got lost between basketball practices. For example, during a scrimmage game which I took her to, she started fighting with another girl on her team right in the middle of the game. While she was battling it out with the girl about what position they were playing, the rest of team were on the other end of the court trying to defend against the other team. Even when playing a team sport, Toni still looks out for herself.

Toni is very at ease with her relatives. When she talks to her aunts or older cousins on the phone, it seems as if she is talking with her peers. In a way, she lacks social grace because she treats everyone as her equal. Toni does not know when she is being rude instead of cute. To others, Toni appears not to know "her place."

Toni's behavior is further strengthened by social control, the third component. The center, the basketball team, and the relatives' homes are forms of social control. The center is a place where Toni conforms to the rules. She acts tough because she needs to guard against the older children. When she is playing basketball, she acts as a team player most of the time. Sometimes, she forgets and thinks of only herself. The informality between Toni and her relatives reinforces her lack of social grace in the eyes of others.

As a member of the community, the fourth component, Toni is able to participate in the activities provided by the center: Activities like attending the Mackintosh Lab at the

university and learning how to "step" from some of the brothers of one of the Black Greek Fraternities at the nearby university. As a member of the community, Toni is able to participate on a basketball team where her athletic ability is being developed. As a member of the community, Toni is able to be with her relatives and do the things that they do. In essence, membership means the ability to part take in activities offered by the community.

Toni and her family receive mutual support, the fifth component, from their community. At the center, adults make sure that Toni does not misbehave too much. They keep an eye on Toni for Pat. Being on the basketball team gives Toni self-confidence. When Pat did attend Toni's scrimmage or her last game, the other parents cheered for Toni and offered her words of encouragement. Other parents substituted for Pat's absence. Toni's immediate family members are very supportive of Pat and her two children. They try to provide Toni and Anton with material goods that Pat can not afford on her salary, things like clothes, bikes, and games. They are called on to take the children when they are sick and have to stay home from school. Thus, Pat does not have to take time off from work which means salary is not lost.

Although, Toni is taken care of physically, but her emotional needs are not being met by her community. As a member of the community, Toni is able to access the resources provided by her community and in return her behavior is influenced and reinforced through social control component of the community. Therefore, it is hard to say whether Toni's community is beneficial or harmful to her in shaping her life.

Toni's community is only part of her life that influences her behavior displayed at

school. The other major influence is her family life. According to Blackwell (1985), family has several functions. Blackwell (1985) has extracted most of his information from a study conducted by Andrew Billingsley in his book *Black Families in White America*.

One of the functions of a family is called the **instrumental function**. A family provides its members with "economic well being and physical and social sustenance" (Blackwell, p. 99). In order to achieve economic and physical well being, a family needs to provide "stability when it comes to meeting basic needs such as food, housing, clothing, and health care" (Blackwell, p. 100). Blackwell states that if a family is to meet these basic needs, then a family must have a dependable income. Therefore, Toni's family has achieved instrumental functions. Pat has a job which brings in a steady income. Toni is taken care of physically--her basic needs are provided.

The other function of a family is **expressive functions**. They "deal with the emotional state--social relations and feelings *between* family members and their psychological well-being" (Blackwell, p. 100). Blackwell suggests that a family provides its members with the following emotions:

(1) Social desire for love and affection
(2) A sense of belonging to a group
(3) Companionship and group acceptance
(4) Self-recognition

We are social beings. We possess the desire to be loved and feel wanted. This need for love starts with the family members because they are our first significant others. We all feel the need to belong to a group. No one likes to be alone. As a family member, one is already in a group and feels wanted. Not only is he a member of a group, he is also

accepted by his family. Therefore, he develops a good rapport with his family. Lastly, self-recognition promotes self-esteem. African American leaders like Reverend Jesse Jackson often use repetitive recitations of **"I am somebody," "I am important," "I am worthy," and "I am of value."** in his speeches in order to inspire self-worthiness in African Americans. It makes us feel good about ourselves to be somebody. If we say **"I am somebody"** often enough, we might just believe we have self-worth.

Thus, obtaining the goals of expressive functions within a family "depend upon the quality of reciprocal relationships among individual members of the family" (Blackwell, p. 100). The goals of expressive functions are not being met by Toni's family. The relationship between Pat and Toni is one with many conflicts. Judging from the conversation that Toni that I heard Toni have with her mother on the phone, their relationship appears to be more of a peer relationship rather than a mother-daughter one. Toni had called Pat to check-in with her while spending her first weekend with me. Pat, apparently, told her that she went to see New Jack City when Toni asked her what she did that night. Toni answered her mother, "Girl, why didn't you take me?" Toni's familiarity with Pat may be attributed to her lack of social grace with outsiders.

From her view point, Toni considers the emotional needs provided by a family are mostly missing. Only one of the four emotional needs are met for Toni and that is the self-recognition. Even then, it is in the negative aspect. Toni recognizes herself as being not wanted or accepted by her mother. She often says that she is nobody. Toni often threatens running away. She has no sense of belonging to a family. She does not feel that she is

accepted by her mother. She desires affection from her mother for she is not receiving it in the form that she needs it.

One of the **instrumental functions** of the family is to provide stability of the family when meeting basic needs. On the surface, Toni's family appears to have achieved this goal. However, Toni's family life appears unstable because her parents are divorced. The stability for Toni is questionable due to the fact that her parents are divorced. According to Blackwell (1985), in the past two decade, two-parent families in the African American community have dropped down to only 55.5 percent, whereas, for Caucasian families, it is 88 percent.

To further increase the instability in Toni's life, Pat moved in with her boyfriend who is also a divorcee and who has a son in his custody. According to David Shutlz, there are four types of boyfriends: (1) the quasi-father, (2) the supportive biological father, (3) the supportive companion, and (4) the pimp (Blackwell). Kevin, Pat's boyfriend, is more like a quasi-father to Toni. Therefore, only the **quasi-father** will be defined. A quasi-father gives something and expects something in return. A **quasi-father** has these qualities: (1) he offers long term support for his girlfriend and her children; (2) he attempts to establish a relationship with her children; (3) the relationship is public knowledge; and (4) he is allowed intermittent visits to the family if not living with them. All these characteristics apply to Kevin with the exception of the last one--Kevin is the one who is providing housing for Pat and her children. In return, the **quasi-father** has the assurance that his food will be prepared for him. His laundry will done for him. He has assurances of sexual gratification.

Lastly, instead of intermittent visits, Kevin has long-term familial companionship.

Toni is confused with her family life. She now lives in a house in a very nice neighborhood away from the city. She has her own room. She sees her father on weekends. She is torn between the life she had now and the one she had in the past. She does not know what to make of Kevin. She complains about him--trivial things like he has big feet. She does not know how to treat Kevin Jr. From what Toni tells me, she is nice to Kevin Jr. Toni is having difficulty adjusting to her new "family." It appears that Toni is facing instability in her family life. The instability is increased by her unresolved feelings toward her parents' divorce and her inability to decide whether or not she is better off with the current living arrangement.

It appears that both Toni's community and her family life are contributing to her aggressive behavior at school. What about her school life? Is school her savior? Members of the African American community would disagree. They believe that the "school environment is not always a rewarding experience" for African American children (Blackwell, p. 161). Edgar Epps states that "teachers often think African American children who came from low social economic backgrounds are less 'educable' than white students" (Blackwell, p. 161). To some extent this applies to Toni's experiences in school. For example, according to my CI, Toni's second grade teacher has somewhat similar attitudes toward African American children. Toni and her peers were not challenged to do their best in school last year. Therefore, they lack the self confidence and appear to have low self-esteem. They do not see themselves as learners because they were not challenged in school.

However, contrary to the beliefs of the African American community, school has provided the African American children in the class that I student taught with positive experiences. These children have been challenged. They have been expected to do well. Most importantly, they see themselves as learners.

Toni has many instabilities in her life. Her community life is not all positive. She has learned that aggression is the solution to all problems. Her family life is disruptive and confusing. She has not yet accepted her parents' divorce. Living with Kevin appears to pose a dilemma for her. She has not yet decided whether or not she is benefitting from this living arrangement. As a student, she has not been challenged in school prior to this year. With these drawbacks in Toni's life, I would like to make a difference in her life. I would like for her to see places like Washington D.C. and Monticello. I would like for her to feel wanted by spending time with her. Most importantly, I would like for her to have the self-esteem that she needs to feel successful in everything that she does. With all the odds, can I make a difference in her life?

Methods

The unit of analysis in this study is the individual, Toni. Variables involved in this study include community life, family life, school behaviors, and interventions. This case study illustrates the life of a third grader in a Mid-Atlantic elementary school. Permissions were obtained from the school principal, the classroom teacher, and Toni's mother for me to observe Toni in school, in her community, and spend time with me on weekends.

Data gathering methods of this study were observations, and interviews. For six

weeks, I observed Toni in school on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays for two hours each day. I followed her from class to class. For two weeks, I observed Toni at the center on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays for an average of two and a half hours per visit. I stayed at the center, usually, from 4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. and sometimes later. Observations were made during the weekends that Toni spent with me as part of the interventions. The purposes of these observations is to gather data with which to describe Toni's baseline behavior before the interventions, and then to describe any change of behavior.

Peer interviews regarding their perceptions of Toni were conducted during week three of observation. This was done to see how other children in the classroom saw Toni and how they see their relationships with her. Also, the peer interviews provided an additional source of information for describing of Toni's baseline behavior that I may be missing.

The purpose of this study was to determine what I can do to make a difference in Toni's life. Therefore, interventions were introduced into this study. First, I wanted to see if I can influence Toni to demonstrate appropriate behavior in different types of settings. Therefore, every time, I observed an inappropriate behavior, I would intervene and introduce her to the appropriate behavior. Secondly, I wanted to see if Toni's behavior changes in school when she spent time away from her community and her family. Therefore, I had Toni for three weekends. The first weekend, I picked her up from school on Friday and brought her back Monday morning. The second weekend, once again, I picked her up from school on Friday. However, I took her home Saturday morning and was

able to visit the family home. The third weekend, I picked up Toni and Anton from school on Friday for a trip to Washington DC and brought them back to school Monday morning. Lastly, I wanted to see if I could instill self-worth in Toni. Therefore, praises were given as often as they were warranted. Opportunities were given for Toni to feel good about herself such as providing her with the chances to succeed.

The purpose for the interventions was to expose Toni to experiences that are not being offered by her community nor her family. Activities for the interventions included trips to Monticello, Washington D.C., and the nearby university facilities such as the library, computer lab, and the cafeteria. The other aspect of the intervention was to demonstrate to Toni appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. Activities for this included correcting inappropriate behavior on the spot, allowing her to think about her behavior and then having her explain the inappropriateness either in verbal or written form.

Findings

Toni's behavior in school appears to be related to her community and family experiences. Her yearning to be noticed continues to come up observation after observation. She gets attention in school by being loud. Not only does she want to get herself noticed, but she also wants undivided attention. She has a hard time sharing. This is evident in her behavior at school, at the recreational center, and at my home. In school, she expected me to drop what I was doing to heed her calls. She did not like the fact that other children need my attention also. She appeared purposely to mess up assignments so that I would spent time going over her paper. At the center, she did not like it when I was

helping her brother, Anton. She sat across the table from me and pouted. Then, she would ignore me if I asked her what she was doing. That is her defensive mechanism at work. When Toni's angry, she gives you the silent treatment. The silent treatment is a way to get attention. Too often, I took the bait. Later, I realized that it was a game with her to see if she could pull me away from the other children. For example, when Toni and Anton spent the weekend with me in DC, we got into several arguments. During the visit to the Washington Monument, Toni pushed her brother toward the elevator for no reason (the elevator was not even there yet). I asked Toni to apologize to her brother and she did it unwillingly. Afterwards, she pouted as we walked toward The American History Museum. She did not speak to either Anton or me for a long time. She was very unpleasant to be with for the next two hours.

Toni does not communicate her anger verbally. Instead, that anger is transformed into physical and/or verbal aggression. For example, Toni was mad at me for making her take a bath before Anton took his; therefore, she slammed the bathroom door in my face. That was her way of getting back at me since she could not either threaten me physically nor verbally.

According to her peers, (when she is not in control of a situation), she often uses verbal threats. This is her way of solving conflicts. Her behavior appears to be influenced by what she has experienced at the center. At the center, to compete with the older children, she has to act tough. She knows that she can not physically beat them up; therefore, she taunts them. Other children taunt Toni in return both in school and at the

center. Only on a few occasions were those threats carried out. Information from the peer interviews indicate that some of Toni's classmates have either seen her hit someone or have been hit by her. Toni appears to have the attitude that the entire world is against her and she is ready to take on the world.

Toni's behavior in school seems to be influenced by her family experiences. Whenever something at home has upset Toni, she tends to act more aggressively in school. Toni was fine when I took her to school on Monday after our weekend in Washington, DC. She was happy because I packed lunch for her for the second time. Later that week, I thought Toni appeared somewhat distant when I saw her at the center. I asked her if anything was wrong and she did not say anything. The next day, I talked with my CI. Apparently, Toni's mother had told her that she came back from Washington DC too early. Toni took that to meant that her mother did not want her. Toni has the tendency to take everything said very literally, especially from her mother.

Toni often talks about how she is unwanted. This seems to be attributing to her low self-esteem. When I starting my student teaching, she would tell me after I told her to do something, "Why, you don't like me anyway." Being liked seems to be very important for her. Apparently, to Toni, being liked in school means being passed on to the next grade. According to my CI, one of her distant cousins is in the same class and would have been held back in second grade but was not--the teacher liked him to much to do that to him.

She wants to belong and yet she does not feel she belongs anywhere. One of the functions of family is to provide a sense of belonging. Toni appears not to be getting that

from her family.

The intervention on my part seems to have influenced Toni's behavior in school somewhat. Toni shows an increase in self-esteem. Things such as bringing packed lunches from home seemed to boost her ego. She now takes more pride in her work. She takes the time to make it neat. She shows me all her papers including ones that she did not do so well. She is willing to take chances with herself especially on assignments that deal with drawing which she reluctantly did during my student teaching. I believe this is because she has someone that has high expectations of her and cares about her. She is beginning to live up to those expectations. All the weekends that she spent with me, I repeatedly let her know what I expected of her. She was expected to clean up after herself. She was expected to do her homework and turn it in on-time. She was expected to clean up after dinner. She was expected to write me a note explaining her behavior after she slammed the door in my face. She was expected to finish things that she started. Most of all, she was expected to show respect for everyone. My CI saw an improvement in her homework assignments. During the weekend in DC with me, she told Anton what needed to be done after dinner, like bringing their plates to the sink. Respect for others, perhaps, is the hardest for Toni to learn. However, she is showing some effort. She listens more while her teachers are talking. She often tries to help Miles out in science. Miles is one of those children that Toni beat up on in the past. Toni appears to show more considerations toward her classmates.

As a result of the interventions, I became a part of Toni's community and filled some

of the functions of her family. For component one, I provided services for Toni. I tried to open the door for her to experience services and goods that otherwise would not be known to her. For example, during one of the weekends that she spent with me, she experienced some aspects of university life. She wrote her spelling sentences on the computer at one of the university labs. She ate brunch at one of the university cafeterias. She visited two university libraries and she watched a movie in one of them.

For component two, socialization, I tried to change undesirable behaviors found in Toni as they arose. Whenever, she displayed inappropriate behavior, I talked to her about it. Then, I would offer an alternative behavior that she should try to display in the future. For example, during the weekend to D.C., I was telling her how she should be nicer to Anton and in the midst of my tirade, she said, "Why do you have to be so sensible?" I laughed and asked her what she meant by that. Toni said, "You are always telling me that I should be nice and I should do this and I should do that." It is apparent from her comment that she is listening to what I am telling her. Hopefully, she will internalize and share some of my values and beliefs. It is important to expose Toni to values and beliefs that she may not receive from her community and her family. Whether or not she chooses to adopt them is her decision, the option was presented for her.

During the weekends that she spent with me the third component, social control, came into play. During the time she spent with me, she had to conform to my rules. Those rules elicit behaviors that I wish to instill in her. For example, one of my rules is that Toni must eat sitting up. She may not eat while lying on the floor for two reasons: 1) It is not

good for your digestive system and 2) It is not the proper eating manner. When she continued to ignore my warning, she lost the privilege of eating in front of the TV. Another rule is that she is to clean after herself. She must bring her dirty plates to the kitchen. She must put away all the toys after she plays with them. Toni did not have too much trouble with this rule. Every now and then, she needed to be reminded to bring her dishes to the kitchen.

As a member of my community, the fourth component, Toni was able to participate in activities that were offered to me and by me. Toni, like me, had the privilege of doing things on the university grounds simply being a member of my community. She was also included in my apartment activity. For example, my roommates and I ordered pizza for dinner and she ate with us on the floor in front of the TV just like college kids. By being part of my community, Toni was able to take trips to DC and Monticello.

I offered mutual support, the fifth component, for Pat, Toni's mother, on one occasion. Pat told Toni to asked me if I would take her to her last basketball game of the season because she (Pat) was unable to get away from work just yet. Since I was going to the game anyway, I took Toni. Pat never showed up at the game. Instead, Sam, Toni's father came to pick her up from the game.

During the weekends that Toni spent with me, I functioned as her family. She was taken care of physically and emotionally. She was given a lot of attention from my friends, my family, and me. My roommate spent time with Toni teaching her how to play the flute because Toni was learning how to play the recorder in school. She also helped Toni write

a poem which Toni later performed for me. My friends paid attention to her; thus, she feels wanted and accepted in a group.

The time that Toni spent with me, I hugged her a lot. I talked with her. I joked around with her when appropriate. For example, when I talked to one of my roommates about something that Toni did to me and said in front of Toni, "You see how she treats me!" We did things together like getting my laundry. Before, she the first weekend was over, she wrote on the shelf to my bunk bed, "I love you, Linda." To me, that is the ultimate goal for a family--to achieve that love between the members.

Interpretation

I believe that Toni behaves aggressively in school because she has a hard time dealing with her interpersonal relationships. Her relationship with her mother is in constant conflict. She does not think her mother wants her. Pat is too busy to notice that Toni feels unwanted. She does not realize that her remarks are hurting Toni. Toni does not know how to tell Pat how she feels. Toni has very little control over her life. Her parents are divorced. She is, more or less, forced to live in Kevin's home. Thus, her frustration with her family life eventually turns into anger.

Toni's anger gets in the way of her learning. Her relationship with my CI was a hateful one in the beginning. Toni thought she was going to fail third grade because my CI did not like her. She did not understand that my CI pushed her to do well because my CI cared. Toni misunderstood my CI's intentions. Toni has always fought to get her way. When my CI did not back down, Toni did not know how to deal with the situation.

Therefore, Toni blamed my CI for her own insecurities. Now, Toni seems to realize that my CI thinks she is smart because of the appropriate praises given by my CI to her.

Due to Toni's lack of attention at home, she craves attention. She demands undivided attention from me. She is unwilling to share me with anyone else. Perhaps, she is afraid that she will lose me once I started working with other children. However, she does not tell me how she feels directly. Indirectly, I pick up hints from her. She pouted when I do not heed to her calling. She purposely answer questions on assignments incorrectly so that I will spend more time helping her instead of working with other children at school.

Toni deals with her peers both at school and at the center with toughness. In school, she threatens some of her classmates. She has also hit some of them. However, most of her threats are not carried out. At the recreation center, she steers away from the older children for she knows she can not win. She plays with either her peers or younger children. She is very demanding when it comes to younger children. She acts very tough and plays very rough with them.

Toni feels good about school now because she is doing well. She takes pride in her work because she knows that my CI and I expect only the best from her. She realizes that both my CI and I care about her. Therefore, she cares about herself. Toni is beginning to like herself more because she sees herself as good instead of bad.

Toni and I have become very good friends as a result of this case study. I have learned many things not just about Toni but also about life. Life is truly unfair. I always

thought that was just a saying. At age nine, I only worried about getting home before dark so that my grandmother would not lock me out. Although, I was living with my grandparents at the time, I never doubted my mother's love for me. I was given praise at home often enough that failing examinations did not crush my spirits. I am angry with the fact that Toni has to endure so much at the age of nine. I weep for her because she is so young, and yet she is so full of anger and sorrow. Children should enjoy their childhood; not battle their childhood.

Prior to this case study, I thought I was so ready to have children of my own. After this case study, I realize am not even close to being ready. Having Toni spending the weekends with me taught me some of the responsibilities of parenthood--responsibilities that I am not sure that I am ready to take on. Being a parent is definitely a full-time job. During the first weekend that Toni spend with me, there was a big party that I wanted to attend. I realized that I could not go because Toni was with me. I debated about getting her a babysitter but decided that would be bad judgement on my part and stayed in. We stayed up very late. The next day, Toni woke up my roommate and me at the crack of dawn to tell us that it was snowing outside. I was so tired that I did not care about the snow. I was actually upset with her for waking me up so early, but, getting up with the children is just one of the many responsibilities of a parent.

Having Toni with me also taught me about the lack of age-appropriate programs on TV geared toward children. I begin to look at TV programs very critically. I did not want Toni to watch certain TV shows which she was accustomed to watching at home like In

Living Colors. Pat allows Toni to watch rated R movies which I do not approve. I told Toni that if she was my child, I would never allow that. She came back with, "I know, I'm glad I'm not." As a result of my experience with Toni, I have decided that my children will only watch appropriate TV programs that we choose together and watch together.

From Toni, I learned that children are imitators. Toni often mimicked what I said. I came to realize the importance of being a positive role model. I was careful with the things I said, did, and ate. Having a child with me really made me think twice about my behavior.

Toni has also taught me that children are expensive. Although the places we visited in DC did not have admission fees, we spent money everywhere we went. We went on the Merry-Go-Around twice. I packed lunch for the three of us and ended up buying popcorn, ice-cream, chips, and more drinks. Knowing that Toni and Anton were spending the weekend with me, I went grocery shopping. Eating healthily is a big expense that I did not realize prior to this shopping trip. What I feed myself, I would not feed to Toni and Anton. I also realized why my mother gets angry when my sisters and I polish off the grocery order in three days--food is expensive.

The most important lesson that I learned from Toni is that love means to give and take. The first weekend Toni spent with me, she slept on the top bunk when she was afraid of heights and did not tell me. She slept in my bed because I offered it to her. The next weekend she told me that she was afraid of sleeping in my bed. We made a bed on the floor with a sleeping bag and had ourselves a slumber party. Toni did a very brave thing,

she ate my cooking. She ate it because I made it not because it was tasty. She said, "I'll try to eat it." Although she did not finish her dinner, she did make an effort and that made my day. I felt appreciated.

Needless to say, Toni has enriched my life. I am not the same person I was prior to the study. I have gained new insights as result of it. I am going to miss Toni very much. She has brought moments to my life that can not be bought. Toni has a special place in my heart. I will never forget her. I hope she never forget that I love her very much and always will.

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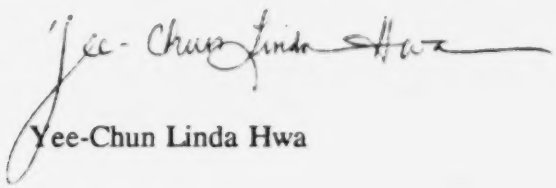

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